

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
EASTGATE/I-90  
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

October 6, 2011  
5:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-108

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Carrie Courter Blanton, Tom Bohman, Dave Elliott, Jay Hamlin, Francois Larrivee, Mark Ludtka, Tom Perea, Rob Pucher, Rachel Solemsaas, Jim Stanton, Cynthia Welti

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Lindy Bruce, John Stokes

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Franz Loewenherz, Kevin O'Neill, Transportation Department; Mike Bergstrom, Dan Stroh, Planning & Community Development Department

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Gerry Lindsay

**1. Call to Order**

Co-Chair Hamlin called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes – None**

**3. Development of Preliminary Preferred Alternative**

**A. Introduction**

Senior Planner Mike Bergstrom briefly recapped the discussion from the September 29 CAC meeting. He noted that about half of the group voiced support for Alternative 1 and about half favored Alternative 2 (both with elements of Alternative 3). Throughout the discussion there was recognition that components of each of the action alternatives have merit. There were also a range of opinions expressed with regard to residential use in the corridor, from it will not work to it could work if placed in the right area; no one supported putting residential everywhere in the corridor. There was recognition of the fact that the corridor serves a different market than other commercial areas in the city, just as it has historically. The group concluded that the area around the park and ride and extending toward the east is prime for redevelopment. Everyone recognized that some of the functional improvement components of Alternative 3 will need to happen regardless of what is done, particularly those aimed at better traffic functionality and more options for non-SOV movements.

Continuing, Mr. Bergstrom said the group concluded that more work needs to be done relative to corridor character aspects and developing a gateway. There was full recognition that Bellevue College is a unique asset and as such it should be capitalized on in the final recommendation. There was consensus that retail and services important to neighborhoods and employees are needed in the corridor.

## B. Work Session 1 – Land Use and Transportation

Mr. Bergstrom said pointed out that the area between Richards Road and I-405 has not received much attention by the CAC during the process, though it was visited as part of the bus tour. He said the lack of comments regarding the area left him to draw the conclusion that the CAC is okay with leaving it as it is; the members confirmed his conclusion.

Mr. Bergstrom referred to the area from 150<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE west to the area of the T-Mobile building should be left as it is given that the area has newer office buildings and is geographically shallow. The CAC concluded that the area is working in its current configuration, but also held the view that allowing for increased height might be appropriate depending on what happens in the area to the north.

Mr. Bergstrom said he had drawn from the previous CAC discussions that a change to residential for a portion of the light industrial area in Richards Valley and for the King County site is not supported. The CAC confirmed that conclusion.

Mr. Bohman said to him the area between Richards Road and the Sunset campus feel separate from the light industrial area, in part because of the SE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and in part because of the topography. The area should be allowed to transform over time away from light industrial to higher uses. The CAC members concluded the broader Richards Valley area should be light industrial with an overlay allowing for some flex tech uses.

Mr. Bergstrom called attention to the area north of Factoria Mall, and to the east of Factoria Boulevard and including the Honda dealership. He noted that the current uses are primarily office and retail. Some additional office is likely to occur in the area given the unused potential of about 120,000 square feet on one of the properties. The low-intensity retail uses around the edges are aging and will probably be seeking another life not too far down the road. One option would be to introduce residential to some or all of the area; another option would be to increase potential for office use.

Mr. Perea said while skeptical about residential in some of the other areas, it may work in the area in question. There is far more retail nearby, and the housing could serve workers in the adjacent office developments. There is also a bus line passing directly through the area.

Co-Chair Hamlin concurred, adding that he likes the plan drawn up for Factoria Mall that combines uses, including residential.

Ms. Courter Blanton stated that for obvious reasons she hoped the Honda auto use on the parcel to the east of T-Mobile will be allowed to continue, but if not office would make sense, as well as perhaps some types of residential.

There was agreement that the western segment would be appropriate for high-density residential, and that from T-Mobile east the orientation should be toward more intense commercial and office uses while also allowing residential. There was also agreement the auto use should be allowed to remain in its current location as a grandfathered use.

Mr. Bergstrom allowed that there had been quite a lot of discussion about Eastgate Plaza and surrounding properties throughout the process. Under Alternative 3 there is the potential for converting the RV park to office, under Alternative 2 the change is to either hotel or office, and under Alternative 1 the focus is on a mixed use expansion of the retail

presence. The initial market report that took a broad look at the corridor concluded that it is overserved with grocery stores, but the more recent market study took a much closer look at the Eastgate Plaza and concluded that the use is in fact very secure. The Community Business zoning allows for some residential in addition to retail, but not high-density residential. Under the current zoning, it would not make sense to add residential above the existing uses on the site. One option for the site would be to leave it alone. Another would be to allow for high-density residential.

Co-Chair Hamlin indicated a preference for retaining the current retail uses but allowing the area to the east to redevelop as hotel or office.

Co-Chair Larrivee agreed and added that allowing for restaurants in the area would complement the hotel use.

Mr. Ludtka suggested the entire area from the RV park west to the church site would be appropriate for mixed use. Because of the relationship to the adjacent single family, building height along the abutting edge would need to be limited. Mixed use in the area would want a grocery store and a few restaurants. To encourage a true mixed use will require some flexibility.

Mr. Elliott pointed out that the building on the other side of the emissions testing facility is only four years old.

Ms. Courter Blanton asked if a road curling around by the church could be constructed. Mr. Loewenherz said it could be done but it really would only benefit one property.

Mr. Perea added his support to the suggestion of Mr. Ludtka. He said he lives in the area and does some of his shopping at the Eastgate Plaza because of its convenient location. There are a lot of people who live just up the hill who do the same thing. Encouraging mixed use in the area would be good.

Mr. Stanton said the mix of uses should include things like neighborhood medical clinics in line with the model Group Health and others are rolling out. Co-Chair Larrivee agreed and said he was assuming that such uses would be allowed in a mixed use area. He said if necessary, such neighborhood services should be called out as being specifically allowed, including community centers, neighborhood libraries, and the like.

Mr. Bergstrom cautioned against being too flexible, noted that to go too far down that road would essentially result in whatever happens will happen, which is not good planning. He added that with some of the ideas proposed, additional traffic modeling may need to be done.

Mr. Bergstrom commented that while the church is in the study area, none of the alternatives consider any zoning changes to the church property.

There was agreement to allow for a variety of uses in the area, with a strong emphasis on neighborhood services as an important part of the mix.

Mr. Bergstrom called attention next to the far eastern end of the study area. He noted that under Alternative 2 the allowable office development is intensified. All three action alternatives offer similar treatments along 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE with regard to adding local services and retail south of I-90, and potentially introduces some housing. To the west of 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE there is a series of independent operations and the alternatives all support saving the uses and enhancing them for neighborhood retail and services. The

difference to the east is that Alternative 2 intensifies the office uses whereas Alternatives 1 and 3 leave the office area alone.

Mr. Stanton said as a user he really has no relationship with 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE at all because no street connection is there. If there were a connection, the picture would change. Mr. Bohman agreed and said the biggest challenge for the area from an office standpoint is that it is physically separated from 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. There are some great retail uses in the area but people cannot get to them unless they use their cars. Better connections are needed, but it makes sense to infill and intensify what is already there.

Co-Chair Hamlin said he agreed with the suggestion so far as the southern portion of the area is concerned, but the Boeing property to the north is close to residential uses. Mr. Bergstrom said in talks with the owners of the properties to the north (Boeing) the concern has been that by adding intensity to the south their ability to get in and out could be compromised.

Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that residents of the Phantom Lake community and north along 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE likely would object to adding much land use potential to the area due to traffic concerns.

Co-Chair Hamlin said the prime concern of the Phantom Lake community is that development of the business park has negatively impacted the entire Phantom Lake ecosystem. The residents would be very likely to object to the notion of allowing even more development on the site in that it would change the system even more. He suggested the city should be concerned as well because of the potential impacts. He allowed that the standards in place when the business park was developed were not adequate and that the new standards are much better, but even so increasing development in this area would be a hard sell to the residents of the area.

Mr. Stanton commented that if additional development is allowed, the new standards in place may in fact make things better from an overall perspective. If things are left as they are, nothing is going to change. To make any changes, however, it will be necessary to first prove that it can solve the existing problem.

Asked to comment about the connection between the office and retail area, Mr. Loewenherz said access improvements for cars is envisioned in one alternative and for non-motorized modes in another. He suggested the optimal approach would be to focus on non-motorized access to 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.

There was consensus in favor of the land use pattern in this area as depicted in Alternative 2.

#### C. Break

Mr. Bergstrom brought the attention of the group to the area where the auto dealers are, noting that there are also some service and retail activities. The three alternatives all support protecting these existing uses. Under the No Action alternative the assumption is made that the auto dealers will grow and likely displace other uses over time. One option would be to allow office in the area with the provision that auto dealers could be part of the mix of uses.

Mr. Bohman suggested the market will ultimately dictate what will happen. Steps should be taken to protect the auto sales use but without precluding office or a large scale use.

Mr. Elliott pointed out that auto dealers have a great preference for properties with freeway frontage.

Ms. Solemsaas pointed out that the Bellevue College campus is within walking distance of 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. She said the students and employees alike would welcome some retail uses there, with restaurants and places to shop during their lunch hour.

Mr. Stanton asked if it would be better to have some of the retail services on the campus itself. Ms. Solemsaas said in many respects that would be preferable, but the college cannot sustain running its cafeteria 24-hours a day. Mr. Stanton suggested the college could move toward a model that would put parking below services, thus allowing for both uses. Ms. Solemsaas said that could happen but it would require some additional partnerships. Mr. Stanton said most major educational campuses intermix student housing with service elements with parking below. In most cases those components are all privately developed for the public institution. There are opportunities for the college to expand, but it is not likely to happen in the next five to ten years.

Mr. Ludtka suggested that allowing the uses in the areas surrounding the campus to intensify would allow for the college to intensify its uses over the long term. The result would be beneficial both to the college and to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Co-Chair Hamlin said that he was having a hard time picturing office uses where the Toyota dealership is located. He said it would be difficult to achieve pedestrian access crossing 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. Ms. Solemsaas pointed out that there is some pedestrian access across 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE already near Robinswood Park.

Mr. Stanton said the Toyota site is perfectly suited to an office development in that it is a large parcel and has great access to the freeway, and it is not surrounded by residential uses. If allowed, however, retail should be required on the ground floor so the site can be activated.

There was consensus to allow the existing uses while also allowing office with ground floor retail in the area of the auto dealerships, but there was no support for big box retail adjacent to it. The CAC acknowledged that should the auto uses choose to remain in their current locations and expand over time as needed, the scenario depicted by the No Action alternative could come to fruition.

Mr. Bergstrom brought the attention of the CAC next to the center portion of the study area north of I-90. He said that the committee had heard from the Lincoln Executive Center property manager about possible redevelopment of that property. The park and ride lot and its connections with Bellevue College is a focus point of the area. Two of the action alternatives suggested a different approach for the central area, one with more of a focus on office and one with more of a focus on mixed use that includes residential. Whatever approach is developed should also address those properties that are directly adjacent to the transit center.

Ms. Solemsaas said Bellevue College favors high-intensity uses in the area. The college sees the opportunity to use its hilltop location to create a more visual access through signage or some other means. Mixed use with housing would benefit the institution's residential program.

Mr. Ludtka concurred and suggested the area should be home to much more density and additional building height through incentives.

Co-Chair Hamlin agreed as well. He noted that if light rail comes to the corridor, it very likely will come through the park and ride. The geography supports the notion of higher density and increased building heights. He said he would like to see mixed use incorporated with both retail and residential along with some office, and visual access to Bellevue College.

Mr. Stanton added that in addition to increased density and a mix of uses, a better physical connection for pedestrians is needed between the area and Bellevue College.

The consensus reached was in favor of increased density and allowable height, with a mix of uses including retail, services, housing and office.

Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that the interstate improvements are common to all of the action alternatives. From a mobility perspective, WSDOT improvements (particularly the auxiliary lanes) will mitigate much of the congestion experienced currently at various chokepoints in the corridor. Despite the State's financial difficulties, WSDOT is presently moving forward with improvements at the westbound ramp intersection on West Lake Sammamish Parkway (2013 completion).

Mr. Loewenherz said the other major enhancement that is common to all of the action alternatives is the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail. He noted that Appendix G outlines numerous different alignments. Overwhelmingly, the preferred alignment runs along the south side of I-90 with a slight variance from what is captured in the 2009 ped-bike plan in that it remains on the south side of the freeway all the way east to the Lakemont interchange rather than utilizing the Sunset pedestrian bridge.

There was consensus favoring the preferred alignment for the trail.

Mr. Loewenherz stressed the need to be cognizant of the fact that the frontage roads need improvements for cyclists, including bike lanes on Eastgate Way. At the intersection points where conflicts occur, some creative engineering will be needed to help highlight the movements and ensure safety for cyclists.

Mr. Loewenherz pointed out that clearly the corridor has an auto orientation that will remain as such. To the extent possible mobility for autos should be improved, but due consideration must be given to all modes of travel. He noted that Appendix F is an analysis done by Nelson\Nygaard that proposes an enhanced transit route network focused on facilitating transit access to all-day markets in the corridor. To do that the crossing at 142<sup>nd</sup> Place SE should be enhanced with widened sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians and lift-equipped boardings on the bridge structure itself. Given the existing transit investments (approximately \$70 million) already made in terms of the park and ride and the direct access ramps, the makings of a transit emphasis area are already in place.

Just to the north is the Snoqualmie River Road concept. Bellevue College has cited a list of issues that would need to be worked out before such an improvement could move forward, including parking considerations. Given the transit operating costs savings associated with this improvement, the Snoqualmie River Road concept represents a good partnership opportunity between the City of Bellevue, Bellevue College, and King County Metro. Another potential avenue to advance these projects is through the ST3 planning process. Bellevue is expected, as it has in the past, to play an active role in Sound Transit's planning process and to ensure that appropriate transit service and capital investments are made consistent with the preferred land use/transportation vision in the Eastgate/I-90 corridor.

A number of unfunded Transportation Facilities Plan projects are envisioned to get under way in the next 12 years. Mr. Loewenherz highlighted them for the CAC. He proposed carrying forward several options for intersections in the Eastgate interchange area (allowing for the possibility of roundabouts, a design detail determination that could be arrived at later in the project development process).

Mr. Loewenherz suggested that the SE 36<sup>th</sup> Street, 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 150<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE corridors within the study area could use some image enhancement, including planted medians. In a couple of places the available right-of-way is tight, but generally speaking it is realistic to assume the treatments can be realized.

General support was voiced for including a pathway through the Lincoln Executive Center site to provide better pedestrian access to the park and ride.

Mr. Stanton said he had no reason to disagree with any of the proposals. He noted that none of the projects, however, had any dollar figures attached to them, nor were they prioritized in any way, both of which will be needed before determining which relative low-cost projects could be done sooner rather than later.

Mr. Ludtka said if most of the overall effort is going to be put into the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway for the bikes, there should be some concentration given to pushing the bikes to that facility as opposed to adding more bike lanes elsewhere. Mr. Loewenherz stated that in many respects bike lanes are opportunistic projects that can be implemented quickly through the overlay program. As such they are projects that potentially can be done well in advance of major projects.

Co-Chair Larrivee pointed out that while the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail will be a significant bike corridor, consideration must be given to using bicycles as a means of getting to specific destinations. All facilities that get built will need to accommodate bicycles. Mr. Ludtka clarified that he was not opposed to including bike lanes on roadways, but stressed the need to be prudent. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail will be akin to I-90 for bicycles and every effort should be put into encouraging them to use it.

#### **D. Work Session 2 – Corridor Character**

There was agreement to extend the time for the November 3 meeting if needed to allow adequate time for the corridor character discussion.

#### **4. Adjourn**

Co-Chair Hamlin adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.